



HOUSESTEADS ROMAN FORT

Ministry of Works Official Guide-book

NOTE

HOUSESTEADS is $\frac{3}{4}$ miles west of Chollerford on the North Tyne and 6 miles north-east of Haltwhistle on the South Tyne. It lies half a mile north of the road connecting these places. The nearest railway station is Bardon Mill, on the Newcastle to Carlisle line, and there are buses along the road from Hexham to Newcastle.

HOURS OF ADMISSION

	Weekdays	Sundays
March-April	9.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m.	2 p.m.-5.30 p.m.
May-September	9.30 a.m.-7 p.m.	2 p.m.-7 p.m.
October	9.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m.	2 p.m.-5.30 p.m.
November-February	9.30 a.m.-4 p.m.	2 p.m.-4 p.m.

ADMISSION CHARGE

Adults, 1s. Children under 14, 6d.

The charges are subject to revision.

Reduced rates for parties of eleven and over.

Free to members of the National Trust.

The drawing on the cover shows an impression of the West Gate of the Fort as it originally stood, seen from the north-west. It is based on a reconstruction of the Gate by Professor I. A. Richmond and Mr. Austin Child, a model of which is in the Housesteads Museum.

MINISTRY OF WORKS
ANCIENT MONUMENTS AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Housesteads Roman Fort

NORTHUMBERLAND

by

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I. The Site

THE Roman fort at Housesteads, one of the seventeen that housed the auxiliary regiments on Hadrian's Wall, stands on the crest of one of the wave-like ridges which slope up comparatively gently on the south and fall steeply to the north between South Tyne and the Forest of Lowes; it guards one of the easiest passages through that ridge, where the Knag Burn makes its way through a little defile. In Roman times several roads met here: the military way, which provided a communication between the forts and milecastles and turrets of Hadrian's Wall, passed under the south wall of the fort, from whose south gate roads led south-east to Newbrough and Corstopitum, and south-west to Chesterholm; a fourth road branched north from the military way in the valley of the Knag Burn, passed through the Wall, and led into the wild territory beyond the frontier. The site is one of considerable tactical strength, though the basalt of the ridge that the fort occupies must have made the provision of a water supply difficult; but here, as in most cases, it was for its strategic value, at a meeting point of roads and guarding one of the few practical lines for advance into the northern wastes, that the Romans seem to have selected it; for the configuration of the ground is such that it was not possible for them to construct a fort of the normal type without some difficulty, and if there had not been that reason for its presence there, more convenient sites could have been found in the neighbourhood.

The name of the place in Roman times is uncertain. *sorscovicus*, the name by which it is still most frequently known in the district, has no authority; two ancient documents give different names; according to the *Nomina Dignitatum* (a work attributable in its final form to the fifth century) its name was *sorscovicum*, while in the seventh-century Ravenna List the name assigned to it is *VELURION*. It will be best to keep the name of the modern farm on which it stands, Housesteads.

In Queen Elizabeth I's time, William Camden, the great antiquary, was obliged to turn away from the Wall at Greenhead, and leave the central portion unvisited; 'I could not with safety take the full survey of it,' he writes, 'for the rank Moss Troopers thereabouts'. A century later, Housesteads was the headquarters of a gang of horse-stealers and worse, whose nefarious trade reached out southward almost as far as London, and northward to Aberdeen, while they gave short shrift to informers near at hand. But as law and order obtained a greater hold,

such activities became less profitable, and in 1698 the last of the notorious Armstrongs of Housesteads sold his holding to Thomas Gibson; within a few years much of the land in the valley below the fort came under the plough, and the discoveries to which ploughing led soon attracted visitors to the place.

The moss-trooping period had not been without advantage for Housesteads, for it delayed agricultural improvements such as had already begun to remove the Wall and its attendant structures further east and west. Once the process began, the remains became less and less impressive, though Thomas Gibson and his successors were careful to prevent inscribed and sculptured stones from being damaged. The earliest descriptions give glowing accounts of these stones, which were kept on the site, grouped together on the little bog-back, in the valley below, known as Chapel Hill. But in due course they were removed to the Gibson's seat at Stagshaw, and thence most of them came to the Black Gate Museum in Newcastle, where they are now preserved; and by their removal the site lost one of its greatest attractions.

A new chapter in its history opened in 1822, when John Hodgson (1779-1845), the historian of Northumberland, whose portrait is now in the entrance hall of the Museum together with those of John Clayton and Robert Carr Bosanquet, carried out the first scientific excavation at Housesteads, examining the temple of Mithras, which had been discovered by workmen looking for materials for dry-stone walling. In that year, and again in 1831, Hodgson uncovered the south gate of the fort, and the eastern end of a building (No. XV, p. 15 below) inside the fort; and in 1833 he examined the east and west gateways also.

In 1838 Housesteads estate was purchased by John Clayton (1792-1890), through whose enthusiasm and care so much of the Wall and so many of its forts were to be preserved. For many years Clayton employed workmen to uncover the walls and gateways of the fort, and parts of the internal buildings, as well as considerable lengths of the Wall, particularly to the west; but it was not until 1898 that the complete plan of the interior of the fort was recovered, in the course of excavations undertaken by the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, under the direction of Robert Carr Bosanquet (1872-1935), whose classic report laid the foundations of the study of Roman castrametation in England. In 1910 and 1911, Mr. F. G. Simpson excavated various structures in the fort, in particular three of the four angle-towers, as well as a Roman lime-kiln on the west bank of the Knag Burn, opposite the external bath-house.

In 1930 the fort and adjoining stretches of the Wall, including Housesteads milecastle and the gateway in the valley of the Knag Burn, were presented by John Clayton's descendant, Mr. John Maurice

Clayton, to the National Trust. During the following decade, the National Trust uncovered various structures inside the fort, notably the granaries; it also built a museum, a short distance from the fort, on land generously presented for the purpose by Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, to whom Housesteads farm belongs, in order to illustrate the character of the fort and its associated structures, and to display as many as possible of the objects found there. In 1931, the National Trust placed the fort and the museum in the guardianship of the Ministry of Works, which is now charged with their safe custody for the benefit of the Nation.

The most important published account of Housesteads is Bosanquet's paper, 'The Roman Camp at Housesteads', in *Archæologia Aeliana*, 2nd series, XXV (1904), pp. 193-300, where full references are given to the earlier accounts; work carried out from 1931 to 1936, for the most part in the civil settlement outside the fort (which lies on land not in the custody of the Ministry of Works) is described in *Archæologia Aeliana*, 4th series, IX (1932) onwards, and particular reference may be made to the fourth report in Vol. XII (1935), pp. 204-258, in which an attempt is made to sum up the available evidence for the character of the settlement.

For a full account of the Wall and its forts, reference may be made to the tenth edition of Bruce's *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, revised up to the end of 1946 by Professor I. A. Richmond; supplementary details are given in the present writer's *The Centenary Pilgrimage of Hadrian's Wall* (1949), while subsequent excavations, which have added a great deal of information, are summarised each year in the *Journal of Roman Studies*, and published in full in *Archæologia Aeliana* (Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne) or the *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Archaeological Society*.

II. Historical Outline

THE general sequence of structures in the north of England after its first occupation by the Romans in the reign of Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) is clear, though the chronology is still uncertain in some respects. It seems that the Stanegate, the Roman road that ran from Carlisle to Corbridge, passing a mile to the south of Housesteads, owes its origin to the governor Julius Agricola (A.D. 77-84), being one of the strategic roads by which he secured the Roman hold on recently occupied territory. Some time after his recall (probably before the close of the first century), when most of Agricola's conquests in what is now Scotland were given up, the Stanegate became in effect the frontier of Britain. Forts were established along its line, as at Chesterholm, two miles from Housesteads. Later, additional forts were added, such as that by the side of the Haltwhistle Burn, opposite the Common House Inn, a few miles to the west; these new forts seem to represent one element in the great scheme of new frontier works which are known collectively as Hadrian's Wall.

In the first instance, the infantry battalions and cavalry regiments of the army of Britain, in so far as they were stationed along the line of Hadrian's new scientific frontier, were to be housed in existing forts or new ones on the line of the Stanegate; the Wall itself was patrolled and guarded by what may best be described as frontier guards, housed in the regularly spaced milecastles and turrets which form the most distinctive feature of the Wall: their task was to patrol the line, to maintain a system of lateral signalling and to control traffic passing through the Wall (for which there was ample provision, a gateway wide enough to take wheeled traffic being provided at each milecastle). At the first appearance of open enemies, they would be able to call up detachments of troops from the nearest fort, if need be; and meanwhile, the troops were able to continue their normal military training, without having to spend unnecessary time on customs and passport control, as we may best put it. At that stage, the Stanegate fort at Chesterholm continued in occupation, and one of the turrets—a watch-tower twenty feet square externally—was designed to stand at Housesteads and its construction began at least, though we cannot be certain if it was ever finished: for within a year or two, the decision was reached to build forts on the line of the Wall itself, and a new fort at Housesteads superseded that at Chesterholm. The turret, if it had ever

been completed, was now dismantled, and it was only as recently as 1945 that its foundations were discovered; they have since been disinterred and the masonry treated so that the structure can remain permanently on view, a little way west of the north gate of the fort. Another addition to the original scheme, made at the same time or slightly later, was the construction of the earthwork known as the Vallum, a flat-bottomed ditch with a continuous mound on each side of it, running at varying distances south of the Wall and the new forts; at Housesteads the Vallum ditch and mounds can no longer be seen; the ditch has been filled in, in Roman times, and the whole configuration of the hillside along which it passed has been altered, by the formation of the terraces to which reference is made on a later page. But there is a fine stretch of the ditch still to be seen east of the Knag Burn, west of which trenching has shown that it continued in the same line, passing about 100 yards south of the fort. Nearly opposite the south gate of the fort, in 1933, were found the remains of an original causeway, its sides revetted vertically in stone, which had carried a branch road from the south-east to the fort; after it had been excavated and recorded, the causeway had to be filled in again, but a plan and photographs of it will be seen in the museum.

The building of the Wall began in A.D. 122, the year in which Hadrian himself paid a visit to Britain, and it must have been eight or nine years before the whole complex, including the new forts and the Vallum, had been completed. There were three occasions in later years when the Wall and its forts, including Housesteads, were overthrown by the northern tribes, in A.D. 197, 296 and 367 (it was only on the last occasion that the Picts came into the picture, a great confederacy which had come into being in the closing years of the third century); reoccupation after each destruction has left its traces, here as elsewhere, in reconstruction—sometimes very drastic—and fresh building. Among the exhibits in the museum is one of a number of fragments from a fine inscription, that recorded the first re-building, by the emperor Severus soon after A.D. 200; the second restoration, by the Caesar (Junior Emperor) Constantius Chlorus, about A.D. 300, and the third, by Count Theodosius in A.D. 369, have left no inscriptions, but clear traces in stone-work of the well-marked styles that characterise them in the north of England. The date (not before A.D. 383) and manner of the final abandonment by the Romans are alike obscure; at Housesteads the veil is partly lifted, for in one room of the headquarters building (p. 13f. below) a smith was hard at work turning out arrow-heads when destruction overtook the building—here, as at Birdoswald, swift final disaster is suggested.

In the third century the garrison was the first cohort of Tungrians

an infantry battalion a thousand strong (first raised in the district of Belgium whose centre is the modern Tongres), that had served in Agricola's northern campaigns; many of its prefects are recorded on inscriptions that have been found here. It is not known what units occupied the fort at other periods; during part at least of the second century the first cohort of Tungrians was stationed in Scotland, and it is possible that we should assign to that period an inscription found at Housesteads in 1898, set up by soldiers of the second legion *agentes in praetorio*—stationed in the fort: but legionaries were not usually employed on garrison duty in frontier forts, which were normally held by the less highly paid auxiliary units. One such unit, the *cunus Hnaudifridi*, attested by an altar from Housesteads found in 1920 and now in the museum, seems by its title to have been a small cavalry force of a type which first appeared in the third century, when it was perhaps added to the garrison of the fort; another altar, now in the Chesters Museum, was set up in honour of the same Germanic deities, the *Alnisiagae*, by men of a *cunus Friderum* which may well have been the same unit, known in this case by its territorial origin, from Friesland, instead of by the name of its commander, *Hnaudifridus*.

Besides the inevitable bath-house, the neighbourhood of a Roman fort was usually occupied by a settlement in which the womenfolk and children of the garrison lived, together with traders and often retired soldiers as well, who preferred to end their days where their active life had been spent, instead of returning to distant homes. At Housesteads traces have been found of external buildings that can be assigned to the second century. But it was in the third century, and in the first half of the fourth, that the settlement grew to its greatest extent, with buildings mainly of stone, or of half-timber on a stone base, covering a great part of the hillside, while beyond them were the temples and shrines in which the garrison and its dependents worshipped. The growth of this settlement, which seems to have been one of the largest of those attached to forts on the Wall, is probably explained in part by the existence of a gateway in the Wall, by the Knag Burn, and the possibilities of trade with the folk across the frontier which that suggests. And there can be no clearer indication of the peaceful state of affairs normally prevailing, for the greater part of the occupation, than the way in which the buildings of the settlement were allowed to come right up to the walls of the fort, and to straggle away from it, without the provision of any sort of defence; on other Roman frontiers, notably on the Antonine Wall in Scotland, fortified annexes were provided for such civilians as were prepared to venture so far afield. In due course the settlement at Housesteads came to acquire some sort of self-government; a fragmentary inscription in the museum records work carried

out in accordance with a decree of the inhabitants of the *vicus* (village)—which, like the similar settlement at Chesterholm, was a corporate body with magistrates of its own, comparable perhaps to a modern parish council.

After the great disaster of A.D. 367, which led to the last reorganisation of the northern frontier by Count Theodosius, the settlement seems to have been abandoned; the dependents of the garrison had to be accommodated within the walls of the fort, where the headquarters building and the granaries were put at their disposal; and it may be that here, as at Chesterholm, additional living-accommodation was provided by the erection of fresh buildings on the rampart itself.

For a long time after the close of the Roman occupation nothing is known of the history of the site, but tradition connects it in some way with the travels of St. Cuthbert; it is from him that the bold hill beyond the defile west of the milecastle is said to get its name, Cuddy's Crag. Whatever truth there may be in this tradition (which is by no means improbable), there are grounds for supposing that there was some kind of resort to Housesteads in the dark ages; inside a stone water-tank west of the turret a stone *kist*, that appears to belong to that period, may be seen, and near it were found traces of an apsidal structure, which may have been as late. But other inserted buildings, such as that which until a few years ago lay astride the main street just inside the south gate of the fort, or the little baste-house built up against the east tower of that gate, with a corn-drying kiln inserted in the guard-room of the tower, belong to the moss-trooping period, which opens the modern history of Housesteads.

III. The Fort

Introduction

THE permanent forts of the Roman Empire, built to house each a unit of auxiliary infantry or cavalry, were derived ultimately in plan from the marching-camp of the Republic, though its palisade and slight ditch were replaced by defences that tended to grow more and more elaborate. The purpose of such camps and the forts as well was twofold: to protect the occupants against attack—the ditch and rampart served this purpose—and to enable them to march out and deal with an enemy in the open as rapidly as possible—for this purpose there was a wide gateway in each side of the defences. Marching-camps sometimes adopt quite irregular shapes, but the forts, at least in the second century, were normally rectangular, oblong more commonly than square, and with their corners rounded off like playing-cards. At each corner was a tower, and intermediate towers were frequently provided between the corners and the gateways. Such forts varied in size from two acres to six or more; that at Housesteads is slightly under five acres in size.

By the second century, ramparts of earth or clay and timber had gone out of use, except in districts where good building-stone was not readily available; and the normal form, which is represented at Housesteads, was a stone wall four or five feet thick and standing perhaps twelve or fourteen feet high, with a mound of earth, rather lower, behind it; this mound formed a convenient place for supports to collect without being exposed to hostile fire, besides reinforcing the wall against hostile mining or battering-rams. The protection afforded by ditches varied considerably from fort to fort; at Housesteads, where the configuration of the ground gave natural protection, and the rock comes up close to the surface, only two short lengths of ditch were dug protecting the northern halves of the east and west ends—these ditches were found by trenching in 1932, but are no longer visible on the surface.

The internal arrangements of marching-camps and forts alike follow the same general plan, based on a regular system of streets. In the first place, a roadway known as the *intervallum* ran immediately inside the rampart mound, so that there was an open space, between it and the barracks, where troops could assemble. Four main streets divided the interior into five main blocks:

(1) The *via principalis* passed right across from north to south, connecting the gates in the side walls; these side gates were normally rather nearer the front than the back wall of the fort.

(2) The *via praetoria* ran from the front (i.e. east) gate, joining the *via principalis* at right-angles, and dividing into equal halves the first division of the interior, which was known as the *praetentura*—the front portion, assigned for tents in a marching-camp or barracks in a permanent fort, as opposed to the *retentura*, behind the central range of buildings.

(3) The *via decumana* ran from the back (i.e. west) gate of the fort, bisecting the *retentura*, to join (4) the *via quintana*, which ran parallel to the *via principalis*, and separated the *retentura* from the central range. This normally comprised the administrative headquarters (*principia*) in the centre, flanked by the commanding officer's house (*praetorium*), granaries (*horrea*), and sometimes other buildings as well; the *praetentura* and *retentura*, with about two-thirds of the internal area, were reserved for barrack accommodation.

The Gateways

All four gateways at Housesteads were built in exceptionally massive masonry to the same plan, characteristic of British forts in Hadrian's time, though in certain details of design they differ from the contemporary gateways at Chesters or Birdoswald; detailed drawings and a scale model in the museum, will make it easier for their original appearance to be visualised. Each gateway was flanked on either side by a guard-room, with its door opening into the gate-passage, and consisted of two such passages, each closed by double gates turning in pivot-holes, some of which are still in position; in order to insert or remove the gate, a groove was provided, gradually deepening as it approaches the pivot-hole, so that the lower end of the gate-post could be lifted slightly and then slid out along the groove. In some Hadrianic forts, the guard-rooms were on the ground floor of towers which projected one or two storeys above rampart level; but at Housesteads, as the scale model shows, the design preferred called for a massive gatehouse, extending over the passages as well as the guard-rooms, with a flat roof which would serve as an elevated fighting-platform and would also catch such rain as fell on it, a projecting spout or gargoyle carrying the rain-water off, to fall into a lead-lined stone water-tank, such as that still to be seen at the north gate.

The four gateways have all experienced structural alterations in the course of the occupation; it will be convenient to describe each separately.

(1) *The East Gate (porta praetoria)*

This was the main entrance to the fort; people entering here would have a vista through the courtyard of the headquarters into the shrine centrally placed at the far side of its great hall, which constituted the heart of the garrison. At some period, apparently towards the close of the occupation, the south passage was walled up and converted into an additional guard-room; when it was excavated by John Hodgson, in 1833, more than a cart-load of coal was found in this room.

(2) *The West Gate (porta decumana)*

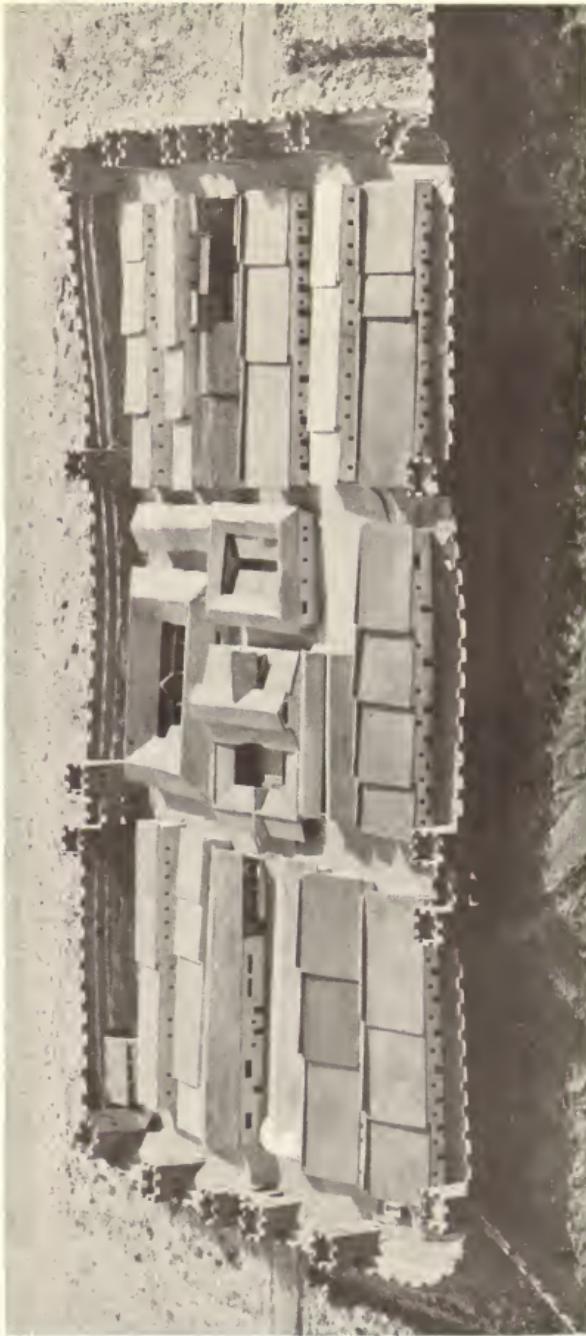
Two stages in the later history of this gateway, the best preserved of the four, can be inferred from the accounts left by Hodgson and Bruce although the later structures have been removed since they were first examined. At first, the southern passage had been walled up, and converted into a guard-room, as at the east gate. Subsequently, the northern passage too had been blocked, and the whole of the inside filled with a solid mass of rubbish, so that the rampart ran continuously through. From Bruce's illustration of the masonry of this last blocking, it is clear that it was done in the Theodosian reconstruction, when gates at other forts as well were being walled up completely.

(3) *The South Gate (porta principalis dextra)*

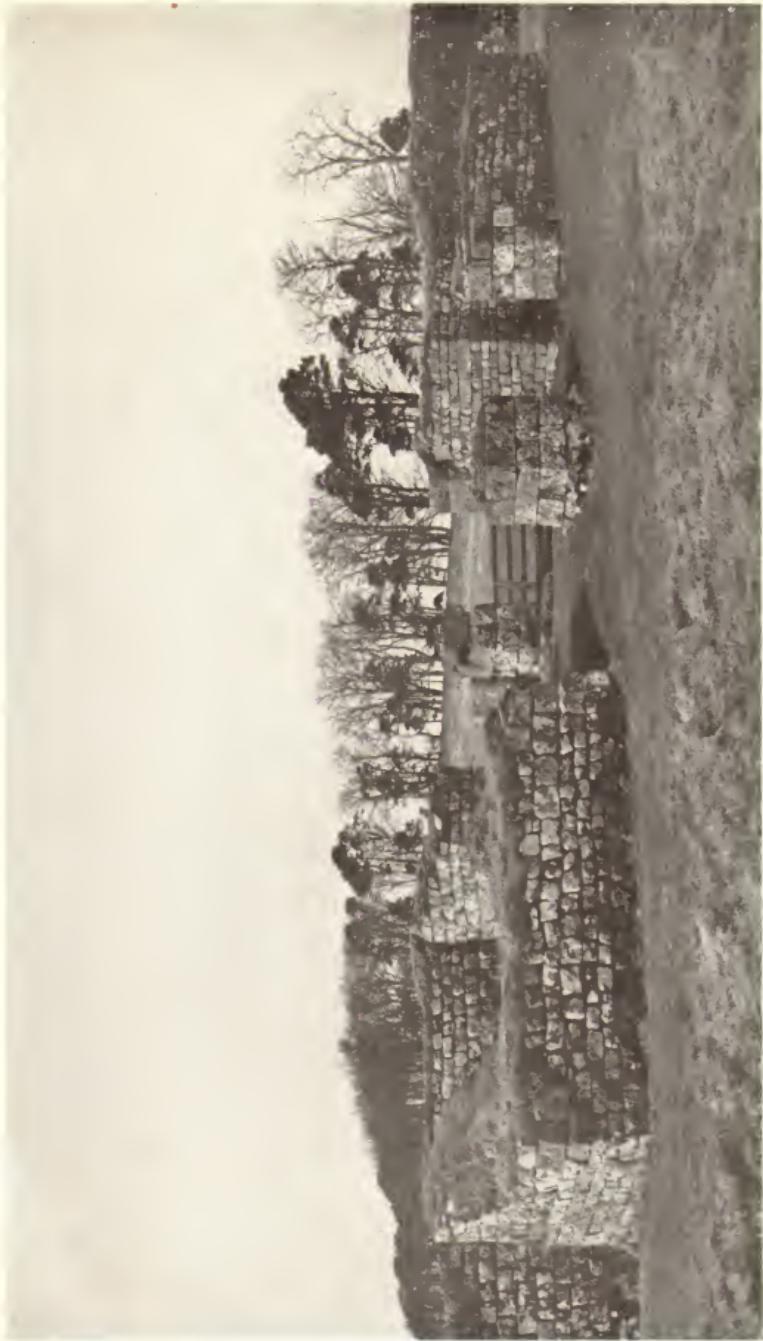
This gateway, excavated by Hodgson in 1822 and 1830, like the previous two was ultimately reduced to a single passage, by the blocking of its east portal. It will be seen that the buildings lining the street southward from here were put up after the blocking, since they are in alignment with the western passage. The gateway has suffered considerably in post-Roman times, probably (as Bruce first suggested) in the most-trouping days, by the erection of a small bastle-house against its eastern side; a passage has been cut through the fort-wall, and a kiln (probably for drying corn) inserted in the guard-room, the original doorway of which has been roughly walled up. The ground-floor of this house was presumably used as a byre, approached by a doorway in the west side; the living-room above was approached by an external flight of steps (now masked by modern dry-stone walling) on the east side. The character of the doorway and surviving windows of this building would be enough to indicate the lateness of its date, even if excavation in 1931 had not shown its foundations to be separated from the latest Roman level by a foot of accumulated debris.

(4) *The North Gate (porta principalis sinistra)*

In its present form this is the most imposing of all four gateways. John Clayton, when it was being excavated in 1853, was so struck by the



Model by William Bulmer showing the appearance of Housesteads Roman Fort when it was in use (seen from the north)



Housesteads Roman Fort: West Gate from the east



Housesteads Roman Fort: North Granary from the north-west

Hausesteads Roman Fort: Latrine in south-east corner, from the west



massive character of its foundations that he decided to have them left exposed; and so he removed the inclined roadway, showing signs of considerable use, which led up to it from the north: later visitors have sometimes imagined that the gateway was never used, because of the sheer drop left by the removal of this road. Here too one portal was blocked up in Roman times, in this case (as excavation in 1930 showed) before the completion of the original design; at the other gateways the blocking seems to have occurred considerably after the time of Hadrian. Bruce has an amusing story to tell of the stone water tank which stands against the south wall of its western guard-room. One of the labourers employed in the excavation, displaying 'the unhappy prejudices of the Northumbrian Borderer,' said, 'that would be to wash their Scotch prisoners in'.

The Angle-Towers

Three of these have been excavated. The ground-floor of the north-west tower was used as a cook-house, a large oven (now covered over again) being found in it when it was excavated by Mr. Simpson. At the north-east, Mr. Simpson found that an original tower in the standard position had been demolished, and replaced by a new one a few yards to the west, so as to cover the junction of fort-wall and Wall; the Wall-builders had carried it on a line which brought it too far northwards for the angle of the fort to fit in symmetrically, in view of the terrain—as the massive foundations of the north gate show, it was only possible to produce a moderately level platform for the fort by considerable levelling up at the north side, and it is plain that there were limits beyond which the builders were not prepared to go. The tower at the south-east angle was largely reconstructed during the occupation; in its present form, it has no entrance at ground level, and a large water-tank has been built up against its inside wall—though its lead lining has gone, the iron clamps which held its stone slabs together are mainly still in position, as are the sheets of lead in the joints between the slabs and, in some cases, the lead run in to seal the iron clamps.

The Interval-Towers

These are not all part of the original layout of the fort; in particular, two on the east rampart, and one between the south-east angle and the south gate, probably belong to the Constantian re-building. The dates of other buildings that abut against the fort-wall are uncertain; there are two immediately north of the west gate, and another west of the north gate. In addition, the fort-wall has been thickened by the addition of a mass of masonry in one or two places, in particular

immediately to the south of the east gate; these thickenings have been interpreted in the past as the emplacements for ballistae, the heavy catapults which the Roman army regularly used, particularly in the third and fourth centuries, but it seems more likely that they represent the remains of stairways, to give access to the top of the gatehouse and the fighting-platform on the fort-wall.

The Headquarters Building (principia) (X on the plan)

This stands at the junction of the *via praetoria* and the *via principalis*, fronting eastwards on the latter. Successive destructions and restorations, and in later times the work of stone-robbbers, have combined to make its remains less easy to interpret than the better preserved examples at Chesters and Chesterholm; but there is so little variation in the type, from fort to fort, and it is not difficult to reconstruct the original aspect of this particular building. Its main entrance was by an archway in its east front, giving access to an open courtyard flanked, originally on all four sides, subsequently to north, east and south, by a verandah, the drip from whose eaves was collected by a gutter which can still be seen in the north-west quarter of the courtyard. From the courtyard another archway led into a great hall, running the full width of the building, access to which was also provided by doors from the side-streets; that at the south end is no longer visible, but the well-worn steps leading up to the northern door will be noticed. On the left of the steps as one mounts them is a large block of masonry that represents the tribunal, the platform on which the commanding officer of the garrison took his seat on ceremonial or official occasions. This hall probably stood higher than any other building inside the fort (as will be seen from the small-scale reconstruction model of the fort, which forms one of the most interesting exhibits in the museum), and was lighted by clerestory windows, as were the municipal basilicas, whose plan is clearly derived from the same source. The western side of the hall was occupied by the customary range of five rooms, now largely obscured by later alterations and the work of stone-robbers. The central room was the unit's chapel, often containing a statue of the Emperor under whom the fort had been built or last repaired, as well as the unit's standards, and perhaps an altar or two to Discipline or the Emperor's Genius; the pair of rooms to the north of it were occupied by the battalion adjutant (*cornicularius*) and his clerks, and those to the south by the standard-bearers (*signiferi*) and their assistants, whose duties included keeping the company accounts and acting as managers of the unit's savings bank (as it may fairly be described)—this was the administrative centre of the fort, devoted to the elaborate book-keeping that characterised the

Roman no less than the modern military system. The three central rooms originally had wide arched entrances, partially closed by stone screens, into the tops of which metal grilles were inserted, similar to that from Chesterholm which now stands against the east wall of the museum.

The cross-hall was where the commander of the battalion issued his orders, dealt with defaulters and heard requests for leave, complaints and the like; here, too, the company commanders (*centuriones*) may have had their meeting place, while the non-commissioned officers probably had similar meeting-places (for the clubs of men holding the same or similar ranks which were a distinctive feature of the Roman military system, from the time of Severus onwards) in the verandah round the courtyard. But in the closing years of the fort's existence all this was changed. The verandah was converted into living-rooms, its open front being walled up; in the cross-hall partitions were inserted, and hearths and broken crockery showed the excavators of 1898 that what had begun as a hall of assembly had ended as a mess-room. More striking still was the evidence from the most northerly room, once the adjutant's inner office—where hundreds of arrow-heads, in all stages of manufacture, showed that in the closing days of the occupation no attempt was made, in the face of a grave emergency, to continue book-keeping.

The Granaries (horrea) (VIII on the plan)

These buildings, which are separated from the north wall of the headquarters by a narrow side-street, underwent very drastic alterations during the period from Hadrian to Count Theodosius; a kiln in the centre of the south granary is considerably later, probably belonging, like that at the south gateway, to the moss-trooping days. Originally there seems to have been a single granary, with a line of columns along its centre supporting the main timbers of its massive roof; subsequently the columns were replaced by a partition-wall, and later a second partition was inserted, so that the final form, now visible, was a pair of granaries separated by a narrow space, between the two partition-walls, in which the column bases can be seen. Like most Roman granaries in Britain these had external buttresses at intervals, to take the thrust of a heavy stone-slate roof. Between the buttresses ventilators allowed free passage of air beneath the floor, which in this case was of lengthwise planks laid on cross-beams resting on short upright pillars and with their inner ends let into the partition-walls; this arrangement must not be confused with the hypocaust system, by which hot air from a furnace was circulated below a raised floor. The entrances of the granaries were at the west end, where an open space allowed carts to be loaded or

unloaded without interfering with traffic or with the assembling of troops on the *via principialis*.

In the last stages of the occupation, the granaries were converted into living-accommodation; their floors were filled up solid and flagged over, and a considerable amount of late pottery, and the usual debris of occupation, were found on them when they were opened out by the National Trust in 1931 and 1932.

The Commandant's House (praetorium) (XII on the plan)

This building, of which part only remains uncovered, on the south side of the headquarters, was a residence of the common Roman type, consisting of four ranges of rooms round an open courtyard; it must be remembered that the commanders of auxiliary units were normally men of good standing from the towns of the Roman world, who would bring their wives and families with them when posted to frontier forts such as this, and would require accommodation such as they had been accustomed to at home. There were probably two main entrances to the building, one in the centre of the east front, and one in the north wall, opposite the side door into the hall of the headquarters, so that the commander could walk straight across to his orderly-room; a back-door would give access, across an open passage, to No. XI, a small bath-house provided for him and his household.

The Hospital (valetudinarium) (IX on the plan)

Immediately behind the headquarters the excavators of 1898 found another structure of the courtyard type, with four ranges of rooms. From its position and its plan it may be identified, by analogy with the evidence from other Roman forts, as the unit's hospital, with accommodation for medical stores and for an operating theatre as well as for patients; it is well enough preserved to warrant uncovering for permanent display, but at present none of its masonry shows above the turf: its plan is shown in the museum, and its probable aspect may be seen in the small-scale model of the fort, already referred to.

The Barracks

The last building (VII) in the central block is similar in size and general arrangement to the barracks in the east and west portions of the fort; its purpose is not clear. Nos. I-VI and XIII-XVIII in the RETENTURA and PRÄTENTURA respectively, comprise in each case three long buildings on each side of the main street and parallel to it and the long axis

of the fort. All twelve buildings have suffered to a greater or lesser extent from destruction and remodelling, and none have been excavated sufficiently for their original arrangement to be completely made out; but most of them must have been barracks, sub-divided into ten pairs of rooms, each for one section of eight or ten men (*contubernium*), while the centurion and N.C.O.s of the century were assigned more commodious quarters at one end of each building. The garrison of Housesteads being a battalion a thousand strong, it was sub-divided into ten centuries, so that two of these twelve buildings, as well as No. VII in the central block must have been used for some purpose other than barrack accommodation—for stabbing, perhaps, or as cart-sheds and the like.

No. XV, on the north side of the *via praetoria*, is built of far finer masonry than the others, in a style reminiscent of some Constantian work (for example, at Risingham in Redesdale); at its east end may still be seen part of a hypocaust, first uncovered by John Hodgson in 1831: it is possible that in the fourth century this building was converted into an internal bath-house for the rank and file. No. IV produced so much evidence of industrial activities as to suggest to its excavators that it had been used, in the later part of the occupation, as a workshop.

Water Supply and Drainage

Like all Roman forts, this one was provided with an elaborate system of drains, which as yet is only known imperfectly. In many places stone tanks have been found, for storing rain-water, particularly in the south-east quarter of the fort, to which gutters and drains conveyed as much surface water as possible, not only for storage but also to provide for the periodical flushing of the latrines. The latrine-building was immediately west of the south-east angle-tower, against which stands the most impressive of the water-tanks, already described. A plan and photographs in the museum show the successive arrangements in the latrine, as they were discovered by Mr. Simpson when he excavated the building; it is now largely filled in again. The main sewer passed below the fort-wall at the angle and debouched on one of the terraces a hundred yards only away from the fort, whence the sewage was probably collected periodically for spreading on the land as manure. It is not known whether the fort was provided with a regular supply of water, pumped up from the Knag Burn; this would have been technically within the Romans' powers. An aqueduct bringing water by gravitation seems out of the question, and the labour of digging wells through the hard basalt seems to have been thought too great; the well close to the south gate of the fort is modern.

The Bath-house

The main bath-house of the fort, as usual, was placed some distance from its walls, on the left bank of the Knag Burn. It has not yet been excavated; and successive floods, no less than miners prospecting for lead, and farmers seeking stone for field-walls, have played havoc with its remains; but it will still repay attention from the spade when a suitable opportunity offers.

IV. The Milecastle

HOUSESLEADS milecastle, No. 37 from the east end of the Wall, was first examined by John Clayton in 1853, when its gateways and outer walls were cleared of rubbish; it was at that time that a fragment from a Hadrianic building-inscription was found in it, showing that it had been set up by the second legion in the governorship of Aulus Platorius Nepos, who is known to have come to Britain, like Hadrian himself, in A.D. 122. In 1907 Mr. Simpson investigated the structures at the north gateway, and in 1933 the interior was completely excavated, for the National Trust, by the Durham University Excavation Committee.

The milecastle is one of the normal type, a rectangular enclosure bounded on the north side by the Wall, which each of its side walls joined at right-angles, while the southern corners are rounded; its internal dimensions are 49 feet 6 inches from north to south, and 37 feet 6 inches from east to west. A branch road led to it from the military way, entering by a gateway in the centre of the south side; from this a street led to a similar gateway through the Wall, and on either side of the street were buildings (largely demolished in Clayton's time); that on the east side was of stone, perhaps to house the officers or N.C.O.s of the milecastle, and between it and the north wall were ovens. On the west side of the street were timber buildings, in which the rank and file must have been housed; on this side, too, must have been the flight of steps which led up to the top of the Wall and to the tower above the gateway.

The most interesting feature here is the north gateway, which is in a better state of preservation than any other excavated example. The excavations of 1933 showed that it was erected (by the same detachment, no doubt, as was responsible for the gateways of the fort) before the rest of the milecastle; on its west side can still be made out the buttress of masonry put up to prevent the archway from collapsing, and incorporated in the Wall when its builders arrived on the scene. The gate passage was arched over at both ends, the rampart walk being carried across it on beams, and it was spanned by a tower similar, no doubt, in height if not in its dimensions to the turrets, like which it formed a link in the chain of signal-stations along the Wall.

Under Severus, when the milecastle had been badly damaged, the gateway was drastically remodelled; both arches had collapsed, and instead of an attempt being made to repair them, the gate was reduced

from the original ten-foot roadway, closed by double gates, to a passage four feet wide, closed by a single door; and the new passage was laid over the debris of the destruction, two feet higher than the original road. In this case, the reduction in width cannot have had very serious consequences—there had really been little point in providing a gateway for wheeled traffic to pass through the Wall here, for there is so steep a slope to the north that it can never have been possible for carts to negotiate it; the blue-print had called for a milecastle of standard type, and it was not until the time of Severus that common sense prevailed and the gateway was adapted to the realities of the situation.

Drawings and photographs in the museum show the appearance of the milecastle when it was excavated, and give an indication of its original form.

The Wall

It will be convenient to add a brief note on the stretch of the Wall, nearly a mile long, from east of the Knag Burn to west of the milecastle, which remains in the custody of the National Trust. Throughout that stretch the upstanding work is nearly all later than the time of Hadrian; during the three centuries of the Wall's life it was rebuilt almost from the foundation, more than once in some places, and though many of the facing-stones are original they have been replaced, either in such restorations or (in some parts) by John Clayton's labourers; in the valley of the Knag Burn, indeed, most of the masonry now visible has been set up since the middle of the nineteenth century, but the stones employed are Roman facing-stones, and the lowest course rests on the highest surviving course, now underground, of the Wall itself.

In Housesteads Wood, between the fort and the milecastle, the Wall was first freed from rubbish by the National Trust in 1931 and 1932, and here restoration has been confined to levelling up to the top surviving course; in this length of the Wall some interesting examples of Roman rebuilding may be seen, and there are others in the steep defile west of the milecastle.

The Knag Burn Gateway

This gateway, 120 yards north-east of the fort, was excavated by John Clayton in 1836, and uncovered again by the Durham University Excavation Committee, on behalf of the National Trust, in 1936; unfortunately the water-level at this point has risen since Roman times, and it has not been possible to leave all the masonry of the gateway exposed.

The excavation of 1936 showed that the Wall originally ran straight through without a break; subsequently, either under Severus or, more

probably, in the time of Constantius Chlorus, a passage was broken through the Wall (whose foundation and first course remain in position, below the present surface), and guard-rooms were built on either side of it, not bonded in but abutting against the south face of the Wall; it is not clear whether there was an upper storey, making a miniature gatehouse, or whether the rooms were merely provided to give shelter to the men on duty, controlling traffic through the Wall. Little is left of the eastern room; the rock rises close to the surface, and nearly all the masonry has been removed long ago; the foundations of the western room go down far deeper, an offset marking the level of the floor, which was presumably of boards resting on beams. The gateway was in use in the fourth century, as coins found in it by Clayton show; but it is not clear, from his account, how long it continued in use; we should expect that in the closing years of the occupation this gateway would have been blocked.

A few yards away, on the north side of the Wall, is a depression that in the past has been thought to mark the site of a small amphitheatre; excavations in 1898 and again in 1931 showed that it was merely a quarry, probably opened for repairs to the Wall, whose ditch at this point is filled by its debris.

V. The Settlement

This hillside below Housesteads fort is covered in part by a series of artificial terraces, in part by the remains (now nearly all under the turf) of the closely packed houses of the civil settlement, whose extensive ruins gave the site its name, Housesteads. A number of these buildings, some of which remain exposed, were examined in 1911-34 by the Durham University Excavation Committee. The land on which the settlement stands belongs to Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, through whose kindness the excavations were made possible, and the objects found have been presented by him to the museum, where they form a striking series of exhibits. Most of the buildings so far examined were of the kind common in villages and towns in the western half of the Roman Empire—long, rectangular structures, their gable ends fronting on the street, which were used as shop and workshop and dwelling-house combined; most of them were of half-timber on a stone base. A model in the museum shows the general character of the type, though it is probable that most such buildings were of two storeys and not, as shown in the model, of one only.

Of the buildings left uncovered, that labelled 'Murder House' is the most interesting. It is an irregular rectangle, the west end of which fronted on the main south street of the settlement; at this end there was a shop, open to the street (though no doubt it could be closed, at need, by wooden shutters), behind which was a large living-room. Here excavation in 1912 came upon traces of a long-forgotten crime—the skeletons of a middle-aged man and woman, who had been done to death (the point of a sword was found broken off among the man's ribs), and their bodies covered by a new clay floor. Burial within a settlement was expressly forbidden by Roman law; the care with which the bodies had been hidden told a plain story, which justified the description 'Murder House', a name applied to the scenes of such happenings elsewhere in this district. The house seems to have been built in about A.D. 300 and abandoned in 367, so that the murders must have been committed between those dates; but the precise date, the motive, and the identity of the victims and the murderers must remain matters for conjecture.

Another of the external buildings, standing on the left side as one enters the south gate of the fort, is built of such fine masonry that it can hardly have had any but an official purpose; no indication remains of

the use to which it was put. Its south-east corner has been adapted to the line of the road that led south-west towards Chesterholm.

Beyond the closely packed houses of the settlement lay the temples and shrines and the cemeteries, where the members of the garrison and their dependents worshipped or were buried. Altars found at Housesteads bear witness to the existence there of seven or eight temples, as well as a number of lesser shrines, but none remain to be seen there now. The Mithraeum, the temple of the Persian sun-god who found special favour with the Roman army in the third century, stood in the valley below the farmhouse, at a point now marked by a single upright post. It was excavated by Hodgson in 1822 and further by Bosanquet in 1898, and yielded an important series of inscriptions and sculptures; most of these are now in the Black Gate Museum in Newcastle upon Tyne, or in the Clayton Memorial Museum at Chesters; visitors who wish to see another building of this type should visit that at Carrawburgh, four miles to the east, which was excavated in 1930 and is now in the guardianship of the Ministry of Works.

The Cemeteries

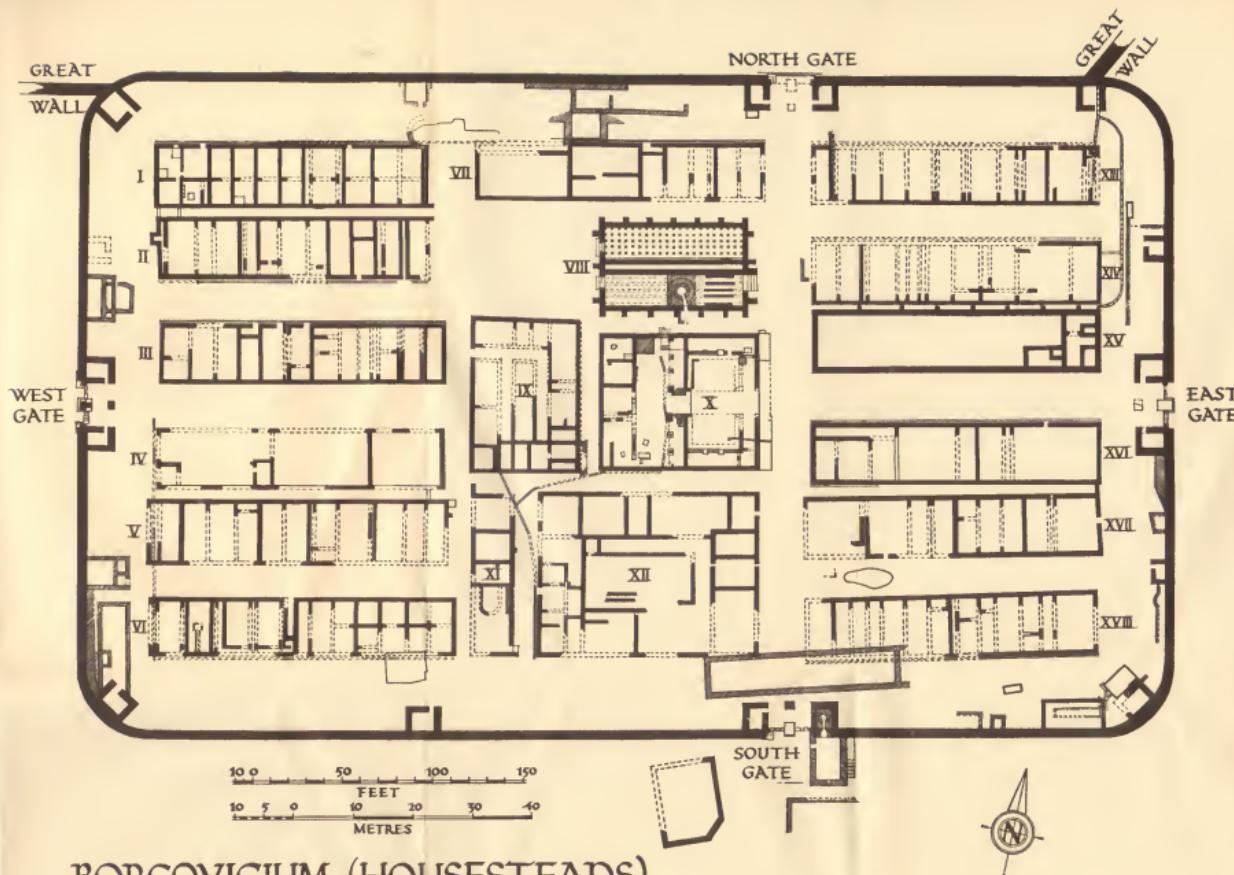
Little attention has been paid as yet to the cemeteries of Housesteads. Several fragments of tombstones have been found to the west of the Mithraeum, which probably had a burial-ground reserved for the devotees of that god; but the main cemeteries grew up, no doubt, in the normal Roman manner, along the roads leading away from the place—the military way, and the branch roads to Chesterholm and to Newbrough.

The Terraces

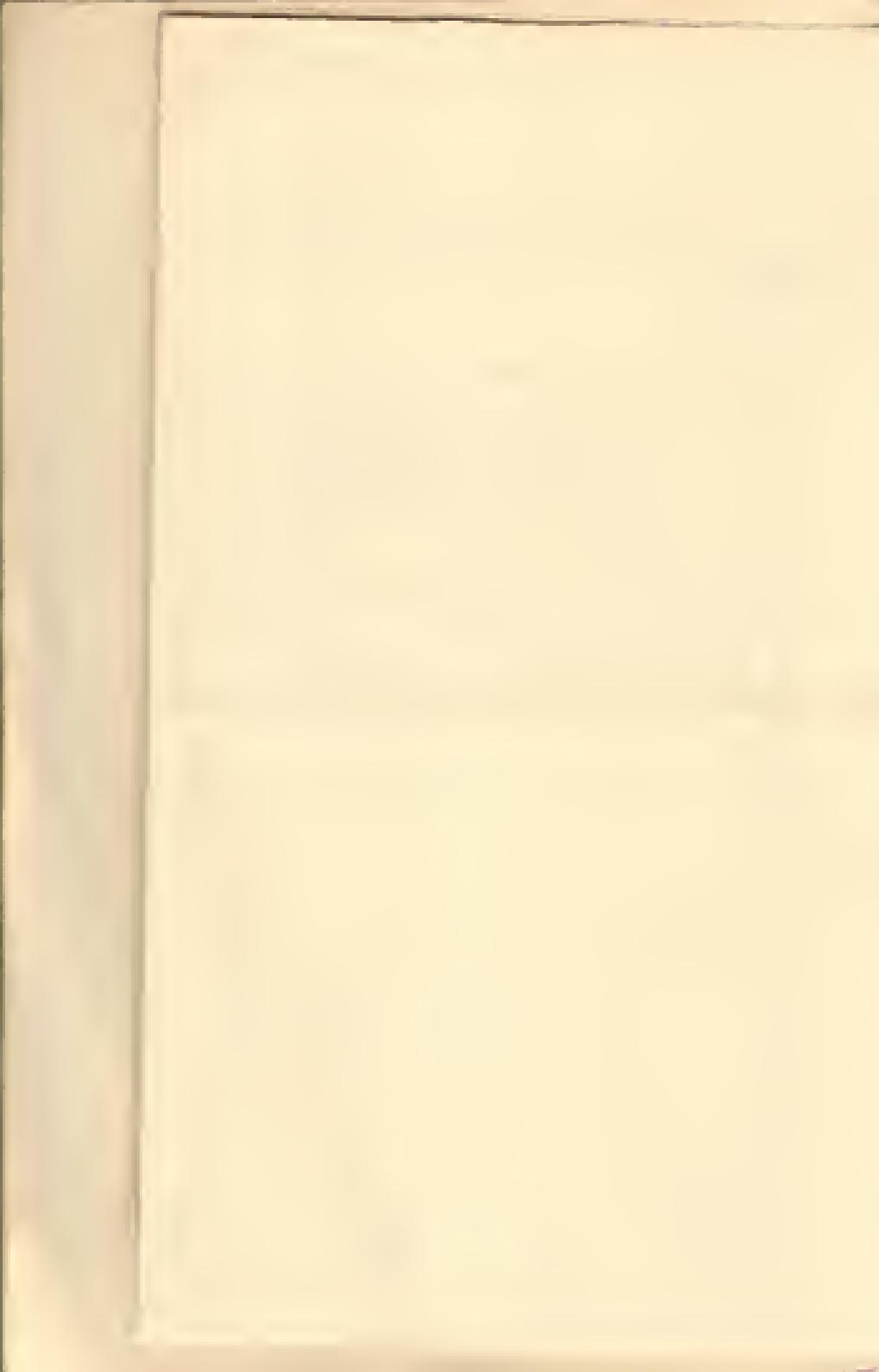
The series of regular terraces below the farm-house, linked with other terraces to east and west, is perhaps the most striking feature of the whole site. Various dates have been suggested, ranging from pre-Roman to medieval times, but excavation has shown them to be of the Roman period; some of them have been constructed over the filled-in ditch of the Vallum, while the street southward from the south gate of the fort, which has been shown by excavation to date from about A.D. 300, has been cut through one of them. The most likely date for their construction is about the middle of the second century; they may have been formed to provide level plots of ground for cultivation as kitchen-gardens or the like.

VI. The Museum

The nucleus of the collection in the museum consists mainly of objects found in the excavations in the settlement outside the fort, in 1931-34, presented by Dr. G. M. Trevelyan, together with a selection of material from the neighbouring fort of Chesterholm, deposited on loan as a further illustration of the character of the Roman occupation of the district. In addition, there are plans, sections and photographs to illustrate the results of excavation in 1898 and in later years, and special attention may be directed to the three models, to which reference has already been made, of the fort itself, of one its gateways, and of a typical building in the settlement.



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